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V CORPS' 18TH MILITARY POLICE BRIGADE STARTS SECOND DEPLOYMENT WITH COMMITMENT TO IRAQI HIGHWAY PATROL

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BAGHDAD, Iraq — V Corps' 18th Military Police Brigade began its second tour in Iraq this month and immediately got down to business.



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Iraqi Highway Patrol Commissioner Maj. Gen. Ali Al Khazali presents Lt. Gen. David Petraeus, commander of the Multinational Security Transition Command – Iraq, with a brassard like those worn by Iraqi Highway Patrol officers, at the IHP conference in Baghdad December 21. The brassard was a token of appreciation for Petraeus' assistance to the IHP over the past year. With its recent return to Baghdad for its second deployment, V Corps' 18th Military Police Brigade took part in the conference, and will oversee the IHP.

Members of the 18th, headquartered in Mannheim, Germany, and 16th Military Police Brigade, organized and led the second Iraqi Highway Patrol conference, at the Adnaan Palace here, December 21. The conference's goal was to update key Iraqi and U.S. leaders on the status of the IHP.

The 18th is picking up the MP mission here from the Fort Bragg, N.C.-based 16th, which is preparing to redeploy to the U.S.

The primary mission of the IHP is the security of Iraq's highways, making the highway patrol a critical element of the nation's security forces. Iraqi Prime Minister

Iyad Allawi has pledged his commitment to getting the IHP the resources they need to operate for that reason.

"Without a secure road network, you have no economy, and without an economy you have no free and democratic Iraq," 16th MP Brigade Commander Col. David Quantock told IHP leaders.

While improvements are being made to existing police stations, ground is being broken for three new stations in the Basrah and Dhi Qar area. "Our goal is to grow to 31 IHP stations all over Iraq. Today we have six. We have a long way to go," said Quantock.

"I dream of stations all over Iraq with their own control and power," said IHP Commissioner Maj. Gen. Ali Al Khazali.

As the number of stations increases, so does the need for recruits.

"Recruiting is your responsibility," Maj. Andrew Johnson, the 18th's civil affairs representative, told IHP leaders. "You know who would make the best recruits."

New recruits with prior police or military training attend a basic three-week course. Combating insurgents, rather than routine police work, is the primary focus of instruction. Combat skills, weapons qualification, physical training, patrolling and aggressive pursuit tactics comprise the major elements of the curriculum, with an emphasis on police ethics and respect for human rights.

Three classes of officers have already graduated from the temporary IHP academy located in Latifiyah, which only houses 50 students at a time. A new permanent structure is scheduled to be erected in the coming weeks. The new academy will have the capacity to train 500 students at once.

IHP commanders voiced concerns that a three-week course would be insufficient.

"This is just the foundation," Maj. Alan Kabakoff, the 16th MP Brigade's civil affairs representative, assured them. "There will be much more training available."

Kabakoff, the architect of the IHP and a Cincinnati police officer, emphasized that eight- and 12-week traditional police curriculums are ready for training, but with the continuing insurgency here, the focus of training is on getting officers on patrol.

"Leaders must continually train their subordinates. Training is not just the responsibility of the training academies," Kabakoff stated.

The IHP are already making strong contributions to the security of Iraq by escorting oil convoys, sweeping the roads for explosives, arresting hijackers, and also towards the organization's own independence from coalition support.

"This is not the 16th or the 18th MP Brigade Highway Patrol," said Quantock. "This is the Iraqi Highway Patrol."

In January, Al Khazali is expected to gain complete control over a \$25 million budget that should enable the IHP to shape their own organization. Lt. Gen. David Petraeus,

commander of the Multinational Security Transition Command – Iraq, authorized an additional \$1 million for station support as a “bridge” until January.

Soon the IHP will also receive nearly 500 new pickup trucks armed with machine guns and manned by officers with the training and equipment to give them an edge on insurgents while securing Iraq’s main highways.

Many additional improvements are in the planning stages, and officials here say the future of the Iraqi Highway Patrol looks bright.

“We will not let the enemy succeed,” said Petraeus in a closing statement to IHP leaders.

Al Khazali declared it a great and joyous day for him to discuss issues of the IHP and the future of the organization.

The IHP chief thanked the 16th for its help over the past year and said he is looking forward to working with the 18th MP Brigade in the year to come.

Col. James Brown, the 18th's commander, accepted the mission with enthusiasm.

“We are ready to receive the baton and run with it,” he said.

